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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 001046

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#) [UP](#) [LH](#)

SUBJECT: SU-27 UPDATE: INVESTIGATION PROCEEDS, PILOT REMAINS

REF: A. VILNIUS 977

[B. VILNIUS 993](#)
[C. SECSTATE 176092](#)
[D. VILNIUS 1012](#)
[E. VILNIUS 1017](#)

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Alexander Titolo for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: GOL defense leadership told the Ambassador September 30 that the black box data supports the conclusion that the September 15 intrusion of a Russian Su-27 into Lithuanian airspace and subsequent crash was accidental. GOL leaders publicly and privately express frustration at the lack of information and, in some cases, disinformation from the Russian side. The Su-27 pilot remains in custody. Defense Minister Kirkilas plans to convene a National Security Council meeting and will propose releasing the pilot as soon as possible after he signs a declaration, the specifics of which are still unclear. End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) DefMin Kirkilas and MOD Undersecretary Renatas Norkus, on the margins of the changeover ceremony of the Baltic air policing mission from Germany to the USG, told the Ambassador that the Ukrainian technical team assisting the GOL in its investigation into the SU-27 incident believes that the data support the conclusion that the airspace intrusion was accidental. Further supporting this conclusion, the Ukrainians told the GOL that, contrary to some news reports, which describe Valery Troyanov as an expert "air space intruder," the pilot is not one of Russia's better aviators.

[¶3.](#) (U) GOL officials continued this week to advance publicly the view that the crash resulted from the plane's navigation system failure. Prominent political figures, such as Conservative MP Rasa Jukneviciene, while not disputing the cause of the crash, draw attention to what they see as the poor state of the Russian military and the inherent danger of the "militarization" of the Kaliningrad region.

[¶4.](#) (C) Analysis of the data continues. The crash inquiry stalled September 28 when GOL officials suspended examination of the black box after receiving what they described as false information from Russia regarding the signature code of the aircraft. GOL officials told us that they are still awaiting responses to questions they asked the Russian government almost two weeks ago. DefMin Kirkilas characterized Russia's actions as "disgraceful," but downplayed the effect it would have on the investigation.

[¶5.](#) (C) GOL officials told the Ambassador today that the pilot may be released early next week, pending the decision of the National Security Council, which will review the status of the investigation. MOD officials informed the Prosecutor General, who controls the pilot's fate, of the Ukrainian team's findings in order to expedite a decision to release him.

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